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Affective encounters with digital knowledge collections: Towards supporting Indigenous wellbeing

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Abstract
Building on discussions in the Information Sciences on responsibility and decolonizing digitization, we emphasize how cultural context is key, not only for understanding mātauranga Māori [Māori Indigenous knowledge], but also for ethically and compassionately caring for such knowledges in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our kōrero [dialogues] with Māori archival users highlight the intricate ways digital knowledge collections are embedded within—and accessed through—webs of social practices, including those that support intergenerational knowledge transmission, whanaugatanga [kinship] and turangawaewae [one's connection to self through place]. We introduce the concept of "awhi"—meaning to support, cherish, or nurture—to frame the ethical archiving of mātauranga Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. We contend that awhi is an interpersonal invitation to center dynamic relational partnerships, guided in the Aotearoa context by the tikanga [customary practices or behaviors], kawa [protocols], and whanonga pono [values] that our communities find meaningful.

Keywords
Decolonization, digital archiving, emotionality, ethics of care, Indigeneity, relationality

Introduction

Information Sciences have long asked what it means to communicate, archive, and innovate responsibly (Blok and Lemmens, 2015; Di Guilio et al., 2016; Fisher, 2016). These conversations have necessitated a shift in Indigenous archival praxes, expanded to consider how institutions must engage with local Indigenous communities, attending to their values to ensure that institutional priorities and curation protocols are culturally and ethically responsible (Mutu, 2016; Brown, 2007). This is especially true in the reimagining of exhibit spaces in person and, more recently, online (Drage et al., 2023; Membrilla, 2024). These discourses highlight responsibility—in partnership with innovation—as a core tenet of ongoing transformations within the global Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) sector. But how might these conversations meaningfully address how archives can care for not only Indigenous cultural heritage, but also for Indigenous *communities*? While preservation of Indigenous documentary knowledges has, for a while now, an established history of contemplating ethical considerations, most existing deliberations and approaches remain framed in an object-centered way, related to the materiality of the documents and their access protocols (Prażmowska, 2020; Ellis et al., 2023). The affective relationships that people and communities build with these documents through archival encounters are rarely considered in such approaches.

One notable exception to this is Diana Marsh's ethnographic study on Native American perspectives on the use of digital knowledge sharing (2023). By centering Indigenous experiences with digital Indigenous knowledge collections (D-IKC), Marsh's analyses reveal the complex web of barriers, risks, and benefits

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that play out within interpersonal practices of curation and circulation amongst Indigenous communities. In doing so, she illustrates "the many ways that Indigenous communities are repurposing, reinvigorating, and remixing colonial collections for their own sovereignty and cultural revitalization" (2023: 3).

As we shall argue in this article, framing archiving through the philosophy of ethics of care further ensures that affective relationships between communities and their taonga [cultural heritage] are centered in D-IKC scholarship in Aotearoa New Zealand (see also Liew and Lipscombe, 2024).

In this article, we build on these questions of archival transformation by sharing findings from our initial kōrero [or conversations] with Māori users of Indigenous digital archival collections in Aotearoa New Zealand. We focalize this dataset through "awhi"—a Māori principle meaning to support, cherish, or nurture—as part of a larger research project, wherein we are seeking to understand the various webs of dialogue and sociality that digital archives exist within and thus should be understood through. Guided by these kōrero with Māori users, we see awhi as an invitation to lean into the intangible aspects of archiving.

An emerging expectation of the role of the archives is to "care and restore" as pertaining to both objects and relationships, understanding the broader significance of objects through the characterization of relevant value systems and perspectives (Liew et al., 2021). Nolan (2022: 2), too, has set forth an approach to archiving that blends extant institutional policies with a moral imperative built on care and safety—what he describes as "a philosophy of active stewardship without direct ownership" over Indigenous taonga.

Drawing on this, in this article we position awhi as an opportunity to pay attention to the emotional experiences that motivate archival engagement and in turn shape the affective consequences of such experiences. Ultimately, as we shall argue, awhi is a reminder of the profoundly personal *and* interpersonal aspects of knowledge systems.

Methodologies

Before sharing the experiences of our interlocutors, a brief note on our methodologies is warranted. We conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 10 Māori users of D-IKC across a period of seven months (February to July 2024). Each interview lasted a minimum of 45 min and was conducted either over Zoom or in-person. Research participants ranged from professional librarians working in both public-facing and higher education institutions to archivists working in national and provincial government organizations, students enrolled in higher education degree programs (including, but not limited to, those in Library Sciences and Communication), and several community leaders and kaumātua [elders]. All research participants represented iwi Māori [Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand].

Our research participants utilized (and continue to utilize) a diverse array of digital archival collections. While some of these collections are hosted by institutional archives, such as those affiliated with public universities in Aotearoa New Zealand, others are hosted by various local governments, crown agencies, and public libraries. A smaller subset of the collections our participants interacted with are hosted exclusively by individual iwi [the largest social units within Māori society; commonly translated as "tribes"] or whānau [families], governed by local Māori stakeholders. In almost every case, the original archival materials are also stored by the governing institutions, located in on-site archives. Access to these physical collections, however, is a contentious issue—and beyond the scope of this paper—but it is important to note that conversations are ongoing between iwi Māori and these various institutions regarding appropriate access protocols that are best informed by local tikanga [customs]. Moreover, each of our interlocutors spoke of occupying multiple relationships to these Indigenous digital archival collections, often accessing the same archival materials for personal or whānau research, as well as to complete work tasks or educational assignments.

We framed these conversations as kōrero [dialogues] to emphasize their relational and reciprocal nature. Doing so builds on our ongoing commitment to understanding—and subsequently transforming—local archival contexts through dynamic, dialogic partnerships with Indigenous iwi, communities, and stakeholders. As such, central to these conservations was the need to establish and support relational trust between participants. This frequently unfolded organically with both the researcher facilitating the kōrero and our research participants sharing their mihi, a central communication style utilized within Māori communities wherein you introduce yourself through your ancestral and geographic ties to place and community. Your mihi acknowledges that who you are in the present is fundamentally shaped by where you have come from. It further crystallizes the many ways that any new relationships you form are vitally linked to yours and your interlocutor's whānau [family] and tīpuna [ancestors]. We believe that centering styles of communication that honor forms of Indigenous relationality and knowledge exchange is especially critical for researchers working within settler-colonial

institutions, such as universities— institutions which were established through the colonial project (Thorpe, 2022) and which are in part responsible for maintaining power imbalances within so-called 'post'-colonial societies (Enslin and Hedge, 2024; Simpson, 2017).

After transcribing each interview, research participants were invited over email to review the transcript and to make any changes, additions, or deletions that they would like to. They were also given space to ask any questions that may have come up since our initial kōrero and an open invitation was offered to find time to meet again should they wish. In two instances, this communication led to a shorter second interview. In analyzing the data gathered throughout these kōrero, our emphasis has been on highlighting and understanding the actions of our interlocutors, as well as the affect that these actions have on them. To do so, we have adopted an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) framework. This approach emphasizes intersubjectivity and the intertwined significance and intangibility of everyday events. It asks you to approach someone's experience with open-mindedness, empathy, and flexibility, with a goal of understanding the *impact* of those experiences on an individual.

As Smith, Flowers, and Larkin have noted: "people are physical and psychological entities"—we would also like to add "social" here; "they do things in the world and they reflect on what they do, and those actions have meaningful, existential consequences" (2009: 34). This is what our study has sought to capture: contextualizing archives through the lens of people engaging with the world to clarify the ways knowledge praxes are woven into social networks. In doing so, it ties into our larger intervention in the ongoing study of Indigenous archival practices, wherein we are interested in understanding how archives are interwoven in individuals' and communities' social webs. In this way, we are broadly grounded in a Heideggerian framework of "worldliness" that emphasizes how an individual is embedded within multiple overlapping social contexts and relationships (Heidegger, 1962). Relevant, too, is Christopher Tilley's "objectification processes" (2012). These processes refer to "what things are and what things do in the social world: the manner in which objects or material forms are embedded in the life worlds of individuals, groups, institutions or, more broadly, culture and society" (Tilley, 2006: 60).

By encouraging users to reflect on their own experiences—notably, not just what they *did* but how they felt about it—we contend that we are able to get closer to understanding how archival collections and platforms exist within intersecting socio-cultural contexts: not as objects but as relational processes. Utilizing this IPA framework directs our attention away from objects in the world toward an individual's perception *of* those objects and of themselves, as well as their affective engagement *with* those objects. To that end, we combined this IPA framework with narrative analysis to identify key themes across our interviews, which included the emphasis on diverse Māori realities and the significance of "awhi" [care] that are both explored within this article. We then contextualized these themes within a Kaupapa Māori framework, which we describe in further detail below.

Adopting a Kaupapa Māori framework means centering Māori values and tikanga [protocols] in every step of our research process to ensure our Indigenous participants and their communities are honored through—and directly benefit from—the work we undertake (see also Wilson et al., 2022). Our emphasis on affective experiences and upholding awhi in the archives is one way we consciously build on Māori values and core principles in our research process and research goals. This Kaupapa Māori framework also guides our use of language in this article and within the other research outputs connected to this project. Our use of Te Reo Māori [the Māori language] throughout is a deliberate choice to center Māori values, perspectives, and ways of knowing. In-text translations are offered when introducing a term for the first time and periodically thereafter; a glossary of all Te Reo Māori terms is included in Appendix I. Through doing so, we seek to destabilize linguistic norms in academia that focalize research through the language, and perspectives, of the colonizer gaze.

Within this Kaupapa Māori frame, awhi attends to an individual's whole self: their mauri—that is, their life-force or essence—as well as their hauora [holistic wellbeing]. We believe that in Aotearoa, to care for Māori communities and Māori cultural heritage, our actions and analysis must align with a Te Ao Māori worldview. This ties into our larger commitment to decolonizing digitization (Membrilla, 2024) by ensuring that Indigenous research is led by Indigenous communities (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

Attuning to awhi

In our early kōrero with Māori users of archival collections, our interlocutors stressed the need for knowledge to be understood, preserved, and accessed in culturally responsive ways (Liew and Lipscombe, 2024). Ethically and compassionately caring for Indigenous knowledges necessitates supporting Indigenous *communities.* This will probably be a familiar idea for those accustomed to working with Indigenous

cultural heritage. Throughout our kōrero, however, we were struck by the breadth of affective experiences that our interlocutors attributed to these archival experiences. Rich and conflicting accounts emerged, experienced not just in the mind, but also in one's body and through one's mauri [essence or life-force]. An individual's mauri shapes their everyday archival engagements, and in turn these engagements then shape one's mauri.

Our interlocutors spoke of multiple realities co-existing within archival spaces, both in person and online. These realities produce diverse motivations for engaging with archives, as well as diverse needs or desires for awhi during those encounters. One of our interlocutors, for instance, first introduced this notion of *diverse realities* when describing their positionality of "having a background of walking in both worlds with a Pākehā [NZ European] mum and a Māori father" (Interview 4, 12 March 2024). In reflecting on their position betwixt and between cultural worlds, they acknowledged the many ways "lived experiences of intergenerational trauma on one side as a result of colonialism … [revealed] the dynamics that have created many different Māori realities for us all" (ibid.). They continued:

> We are not all on the same boat. When you learn to not be apathetic to that fact—that we are in a very unique boat, alongside many other Indigenous folks globally—there's an understanding that's really important to just "getting it". (Interview 4, 12 March 2024)

This notion of diverse Māori realities was echoed by multiple other interlocutors, one of whom drew out the pluralities embedded within Indigeneity in Aotearoa by explaining of her current workplace: "I'm tangata whenua, but I'm not mana whenua" (Interview 7, 19 March 2024). To be tangata whenua—quite literally "people of the land"—is another way to describe Indigeneity within Aotearoa. In contrast, to be mana whenua indicates that you hold Indigenous territorial rights over a specific region. In this excerpt, then, our interviewee is explaining that while she is Māori, and thus an Indigenous kaitiaki or guardian of Aotearoa, she does not hold historic or territorial rights over the specific ancestral land—or its taonga [cultural heritage]—where she currently works.[1]

This differentiation is key. It was articulated by another of our interlocutors who described their institution's repatriation practices as guided by applying appropriate tikanga [protocols] to specific iwi [tribes]. In other words, different realities require different policies. Talking us through these repatriation priorities and processes, they shared one example of how their organization would approach working with a particular Indigenous community. In the following excerpt from our interview, they speak of Taranaki, a coastal, mountainous region on the West Coast of Aotearoa's North Island and compare this with Ngāti Kahungunu, a Māori iwi traditionally affiliated with the East Coast of the North Island. It is an example indicative of how their institution handles centering diverse tikanga for diverse realities:

> It's making sure that if it's Taranaki, it's over there. Because if it's Taranaki, then maybe it needs to be returned back to that iwi. So, then I need to engage that iwi office, talk to them about what I've got and see if they can find anyone that it belongs to … giving them the power to talk to their own hapū [sub-tribe] there to see what they want done about those.
>
> If they're happy for them to stay with us, we'll look after them. We'll make sure that their iwi is acknowledged. And we'll make sure that the tikanga applied to being able to view those [materials] in person is tikanga o Taranaki [Taranaki-specific protocols]. Not tikanga Kahungunu [Kahungunu-specific protocols], even though we're here in Kahungunu. I'm very much aware that whatever the text is—what it's about, who it's from—that the tikanga in viewing that is tikanga from that person's hapū, iwi, marae [an iwi's meeting grounds]. (Interview 6, 19 March 2024)

Honoring Indigenous diversity is thus at the heart of our thinking about archiving in Aotearoa; it's a matter of respect and care, resulting in flexible policies or archival pathways that respond to the diverse and organic ways Indigenous communities would like their taonga [cultural heritage] cared for. In doing so, it is thus also a key component of upholding rangatiratanga, or Indigenous sovereignty.

Honoring diverse Māori realities also means accounting for the different motivations people have for engaging with archival materials. Put simply, Māori users enter archival spaces looking for or wanting many different things. When they enter, they bring with them the complexities and variations of their individual reality, including the many harmful ways the effects of colonization remain present in their lives, belief systems, and relationships. Archival practices must therefore embody flexibility to reflect this cultural diversity and legacy.

The different pathways Indigenous users take into the archives was described by one of our interlocutors in the following way:

> People are taking many steps into it; they're either going to be a hunter or a gatherer … the hunter is the one who goes straight for the kill. You then have the little wanderers, who are just sitting there with a glass of wine, and they just want to meander [through our digital collections] … the same goes for the ones who physically walk into our whare [building]. (Interview 5, 12 March 2024)

While we do not have space here to dive into the varied motivations a user may have in significant detail, the diverse incentives explored across our kōrero [dialogues] with users included a desire to connect with one's ancestors, navigating contested land rights, researching local history, restoring traditional knowledge or practices, unlearning colonization, and supporting language acquisition and competency. And as one of our interlocutors aptly noted: "these motivations feed into each other and mix" (Interview 1, 7 February 2024).

This intermingling of motivation was further explicated by many of our interlocutors, who frequently acknowledged how rare it is for someone to be interested in something in a bracketed sense. Their interests and engagements flow over certain boundaries, where the lines of or between life and work, family and personal are porous. We move across them. Thus, a single collection may be accessed for many reasons (even by the same user) and each of these motivations and aspirations will produce different combinations of affects.

To emphasize: we believe that affect is vital to clarify the motivation, significance, and meaning of archival experiences. It speaks to the co-existence of multiple Māori realities *and* the multiple ways these manifest within users and their communities. It also highlights the need for cultural competency to navigate archival relationships ethically. One librarian we spoke with illustrated this in their description of those first moments when someone enters the archives. They described needing to "read the room" to assess how best to approach and support their customers; some many enter "defensive … [or] slightly arrogant," whereas others are "warm and open and ready to find things out" or looking for "reassurance" (Interview 4, 12 March 2024). In our kōrero with another librarian, they emphasized that "you cannot compartmentalize or segregate the emotional experience from whatever it is a person has come in to do research on. They're very much intertwined" (Interview 3, 11 March 2024).

Thinking through and with diverse Māori realities highlights the affective legacies that texture present-day archival engagement. Our kōrero demonstrate the intricate ways digital knowledge collections are embedded within—and accessed through—webs of social practices, including those that support and maintain intergenerational knowledge transmission, whanaungatanga [kinship], and turangawaewae [connection to self through place]. Awhi speaks to our responsibility to care for individuals as they enter into, engage with, and respond to archival spaces and collections. In this model of archiving, we thus frame the archivist as a kaitiaki, a caretaker whose ethical responsibilities exceed legal obligations and extant institutional policies.

Centering affective experiences in the digital sphere

The first time awhi [care] was specifically mentioned by an interlocutor, it was in response to acknowledging the pain experienced in archival encounters. They explained that their job as a Māori librarian is to account for the mamae—the grief or wound—of their clients' experiences, especially when documents contain untruths or whitewashed narratives of colonialism. As they put it, "it's quite emotional for a lot of the people that I'm with … you've got to [consider] the awhi around it all" (Interview 7, 19 March 2024).

This was picked up on by several of our interlocutors who described centering Māori tikanga [protocols] to "humanize" Indigenous archival experiences (Interview 9, 27 March 2024). Awhi was offered as a means to account for a user's motivations through understanding their past, where archival encounters are intensely emotional owing to a desire to find or reconnect with one's tūpuna [ancestors]. It was described by one participant like this: "We understand that the reason people are looking for this stuff is because they're looking for home. And that can rouse all sorts of emotions: anger, sadness … you know, it's a private time for people" (Interview 6, 19 March 2024). We will return to this idea of privacy and dignity within the digital archival sphere in the final section of this article.

Another librarian characterized these kinds of archival encounters as being driven by aroha [love, empathy], which they admitted can be really difficult to navigate as an archivist, especially in instances where extant institutional policies restrict access to certain information that a community wants or that they understand as "theirs." Crucially, as we will discuss in greater detail in the following paragraphs, during these kōrero our interlocutors spoke of navigating the affect of archival encounters in both the digital and physical space, often needing to adapt or amend strategies to account for the ways intense emotions appear in—and thus transform—the archival encounter.

We believe that these kōrero emphasize the intangible, emotional side of knowledge encounters,

indicating the responsibility of the kaitiaki—the archival caretaker or steward—to attend to these affective resonances. Culturally competent systems are needed for kaitiaki to work ethically within these spaces. Māori deserve assistance and access that anticipates the unique ways their tikanga and tūmanako [aspirations] texture their mātauranga [knowledge] journeys. An orientation towards Indigenous pluralities is an invitation to embed awhi in every stage of the archival process, speaking to the myriad ways policies and praxes should be responsive to a community's affective relationships (to their own knowledges, to one another, and to various institutions), especially in the ways these changes depending on geographic and cultural contexts.

Our findings clarify that caring approaches are needed across the digital divide: that is for engagement with physical collections *and* digital collections. For the purposes of this article, we are focusing on the digital sphere, but we want to make clear that the digital is never only digital, and principles of care applied to digitization have the potential to meaningfully transform physical spaces and vice versa.

Our kōrero led us to the central question of how to account for awhi in the digital sphere? In asking this question, we are writing alongside recent studies that have sought to identify meaningful—and we would add, *affective*—impacts of D-IKC that go beyond quantitatively tracking access data (Punzalan et al., 2017). On this point, one librarian shared with us that their institution recently revamped their online presence. As part of this process, they wanted the website to better communicate that while they may not exclusively house Māori knowledge, "we operate on tangata whenua land [Indigenous land] and that needs to flow into what we do in the digital space" (Interview 4, 12 March 2024). They continued:

> When you land on our homepage, there is a visible Māori element … we want to make sure that our landing page acts like a bit of a Tomokanga [a gateway] with a nice whakataukī—a metaphorical introduction as to what we are about. (Ibid.)

In this description, the website is understood as a gateway, not only into knowledge or archived materials, but into culture. It's the first step in an emotionally charged journey, one that this library sees as navigating Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā—that is Indigenous and settler colonial worlds. Awhi is found in including "a nice whakataukī" on the landing page—a proverb that is traditionally used in both formal and informal speeches in Māori cultures. Centering this on the website's landing page is one way this institution seeks to welcome a person's whole self, including their emotions, into the moment, guided by Indigenous cultural protocols. Awhi underpins this digital redesign to ensure Māori users are welcomed into these encounters with mātauranga Māori [Māori Indigenous knowledge].

This example also speaks to the complexities of applying design principles of physical spaces to the digital realm and the ethics of digital platforms engaging with Te Ao Māori [the Māori world] in ways that go beyond mere aesthetics. Physical GLAM institutions spend significant time imagining the curation of an experience: how people are invited into a space; how they are made to feel either welcome or alienated within those spaces; and the ways that particular kawa [etiquette] are communicated to people entering such spaces. Indeed, on this topic, many of our interlocutors spoke to the need for tuning into the resonances of affective space as it manifests in online *and* physical archives.

Reflecting on the legacies of harm, erasure, and disempowerment that many Indigenous communities have experienced at the hands of settler colonial institutions, our research participants described needing to transform archival spaces into ones that welcomed Māori users; where environments *and* their affiliated processes must actively work to acknowledge and address histories of exclusion and misrepresentations. As one archivist put it: "It's about how can you make that [archival] experience a little bit more comfortable for them? How can you be a little bit more open? I know that's not the 'job' of people, but it helps so much to get Māori on board to engage with these places" (Interview 1, 7 February 2024). Later in our kōrero with this same archivist, they returned to this notion of an archive's responsibility to sincerely welcome Māori users, noting that,

> There's that stigma that's attached to [GLAM institutions]. You need to bring down those walls. Understandably, the stigma should be there because it invites conversation … it's [acknowledging] archives as a type of colonization of our knowledge … it's a conversation that needs to be had. (Ibid.)

This archivist recognized that the "impersonal" feeling you get when entering an archival space, in person or online, is intertwined with extant perceptions of archives as "establishments of power that are holding our taonga [cultural heritage]" (ibid.). The discomfort felt in the moment is the reverberation of generations of distrust and of being forcibly distanced from one's own knowledge and cultural heritage.

Understanding a user's relationship to affective space also helps to elucidate the ways experiences in the digital realm can be more (or less) inclusive of a diverse community of Indigenous users—a community that holds a wide range of relationships to technologies and digital literacy. An (over-)reliance on digital tools, for instance, where there is a presumption of what a "standard" user feels comfortable to do (or learn to do) can contribute to existing fears held by Indigenous communities that these institutions "don't want me to know anything about my tūpuna [ancestors]" [Interview 3, 11 March 2024).

In reorienting ourselves to awhi, then, we can begin to imagine new possibilities for how to account for these same curation goals within the digital sphere in ways that are mana [dignity, prestige] enhancing and empowering for our iwi Māori.

* * *

To conclude this discussion, we turn now to a moment from our kōrero with a Māori archivist, who beautifully weaves together these interconnected ideas of awhi and humanization in the digital archival space. She noted:

> I found the papers of one of my tīpuna [ancestors], my great, great-grandmother, and in those probate records, there was a letter from my great-grandmother, trying to argue that her mother wasn't Māori enough to actually have the rights to this land … [I was] seeing in these records a moment in time where the effects of colonization really pulled our whānau [family] away from being Māori. And it was … it was a massively emotional kind of realization. But I was still grateful, because I wouldn't have even known that existed had I not known that this digitized record existed. And it also gave me a sense of healing in myself [due to] the reconnection our whānau has done to our taha Māori [Māori history, Māori identity]. You know that healing can happen. But I am able to have that engagement on my own terms, in my own space as well and not have to be in an environment that might feel very clinical. (Interview 2, 7 March 2024)

In this narrative, this individual reflects on the conflicting emotions they felt in that moment: gratitude and relief, surprise, a sense of healing, but also of the discomfort and grief that arose when confronting the imprints of colonization on her whānau's story. Underpinning it all is their reflection on the importance of space and encountering knowledge in environments that feel safe and welcoming, rather than "clinical." The digital archival space afforded her a kind of dignified privacy to grapple with intense and conflicting affects, triggered by her engagement with a particular archival document. As she put it, the digital sphere allowed her to experience "that engagement on my own terms" (ibid.). It brings us back once more to understanding archival encounters as inherently affective encounters; "it's the awhi of it all."

Conclusion: Asking "what's next?"

In Aotearoa New Zealand, awhi is a way to honor the interpersonal aspects of archiving, guided by the tikanga [protocols], kawa [etiquette], and tūmanako [aspirations] that iwi Māori find meaningful. It is also a call to action for D-IKC globally, demonstrating how local Indigenous values can shape local Indigenous archival praxes. To archive with awhi requires careful and attentive listening, and a sincere commitment to respecting a user's full self as they enter into dialogue with archival institutions and materials alike.

Further, awhi calls for ongoing dialogue, where the digital archiving space is shaped by the expertise of tangata whenua [Indigenous peoples] and reflects a dynamic relational partnership (Liew et al., 2021). Our methodological commitment to amplifying individual experiences is in service of a larger interest in community, and the ways archival encounters are made meaningful within complex socio-spatial relationships. Thus, understanding the one or the few can help clarify the many and the shared.

By emphasizing the *affect* of archival engagement for Māori users, we are better able to ensure that archival collections and platforms are mana [dignity] enhancing. It focuses our attention on the ways these systems currently meet Indigenous needs through supporting a community's holistic wellbeing. It also points us toward places for improvement.

Our goal here is to direct attention towards the experiences of individuals, particularly their affective experiences, in the hopes that they inspire future conversations in parallel global Indigenous contexts. We believe that awhi is a critical way to lead such a transformation here in Aotearoa and we encourage archival institutions, scholars, and kaitiaki [guardians] of Indigenous knowledge collections globally to consider what local Indigenous values might offer a similarly transformative approach to their own archival landscapes.

We would like to conclude with the words of one Māori librarian who, when asked about the digitization of Indigenous cultural heritage, responded: "When I think of [this], I think of whanaungatanga [kinship, relationality]. You know, how do you infuse that sense of connection and relationship into a digital platform in the first place? What does that look like?" (Interview 4, 12 March 2024). Archival encounters in the digital realm are shaped by who

someone is and the socio-cultural webs of relationships they are embedded within. They exist within a rich social fabric. Awhi necessitates accounting for such a multifaceted relationality. Because archival materials are ultimately social materials, to care for the former, we must first care for the communities they arise from.

Consent to participate

All research participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the goals and methods of the research project, and all participants provided written consent to participate. As part of this process, participants were informed that they could withdraw their consent at any time without consequence.

Consent for publication

All research participants provided their written informed consent for publication with the acknowledgment that all research data would be anonymized for publication.

Data availability statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available to protect the anonymity of research participants, many of whom know one another professionally and personally. The nature of working within a small country—with an even smaller pool of qualifying participants—makes protecting anonymity challenging when complete datasets are published publicly; data is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethical approval

This research received ethical approval from Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (HEC VUW #31110).

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Note

1. It is worth noting that after drawing out this distinction between tangata whenua and mana whenua, our interlocutor spoke about the significant frustration they have experienced when trying to encourage their workplace to sincerely attend to these Indigenous pluralities. They shared that to "put that lens [of diverse Indigenous realities] on our collection would be nothing short of a miracle. But this is the dream for the future" (Interview 7, 19 March 2024). Our hope in undertaking this research is to support such transformations, which we see as necessary for ethical institutional reforms in Indigenous archiving within the Aotearoa context.

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Author biographies

Ailsa Lipscombe is Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Cincinnati and holds a PhD from The University of Chicago. Her primary research explores intersectional experiences of medicalization to reimagine listening through embodiment, relationality, and trauma. As a Postdoctoral Fellow at Te Herenga Waka, she built on her expertise in digital ethnography and the decolonization of research methodologies to explore ethical transformations of Indigenous archiving in Aotearoa. In this, she centers community engagement and an ethics of care, guided by her positionality as a researcher whose family descends both from European settlers and the Māori iwi of Te Whakatōhea.

Chern Li Liew received her MSc in Information Science from Loughborough University, UK and her PhD from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research connects human-centered digital innovation, information sciences, and sociocultural and community informatics, with cultural heritage being one of her core domains of expertise. Her research contributes to the understanding of the potentials, challenges, and impacts digital technologies have on the care and use of cultural heritage information/knowledges, and how digital innovation in GLAM can contribute to cultural and social cohesion. She has ties to a Borneo Malaysian-Kadazan (the Indigenous people of Sabah, Borneo Malaysia) heritage.

Appendix: Glossary of Māori Terms

Aotearoa = Indigenous name for New Zealand

Aroha = love, compassion, empathy

Awhi = to support, cherish, nurture

Hapū = kinship group, clan, subtribe; many *hapū* form a tribal federation (see: *iwi*)

Hauora = health, wellbeing; to be in good spirits

Iwi = commonly translated as "tribe", the largest social units within Māori society

Iwi Māori = the Māori people

Kaitiaki = guardian, custodian, minder, steward

Kaumātua = elder, a person of status within a *whānau* or family

Kaupapa Māori = framework for research that centers Māori values and protocols, a Māori approach or ideology

Kawa = protocols, customs

Kōrero = conversation, dialogue, discourse, statement

Mamae = grief, wound, pain

Mana = empowerment, influence, dignity, prestige

Mana whenua = territorial rights, authority over land

Māori = Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand

Marae = complex of buildings around an open courtyard, gathering place for Māori, an iwi's meeting grounds

Mātauranga Māori = Māori Indigenous knowledge

Mauri = life force, essence

Mihi = speech of greeting, acknowledgment, tribute

Pākehā = non-Māori, New Zealander of European descent

Rangatiratanga = Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination

Taha Māori = Māori history, Māori identity

Tangata whenua = Indigenous peoples, local people, hosts

Taonga = treasure, cultural heritage

Te Ao Māori = the Māori world

Te Ao Pākehā = a settler-colonial/non-Indigenous world or worldview

Te Reo Māori = the Māori language, Indigenous language of Aotearoa New Zealand

Tikanga = correct and customary practices or behaviors, conventions

Ṭipuna/tūpuna = ancestors

Tomokanga = gateway, entry, portal

Tūmanako = aspirations, hope, wish

Turangawaewae = place where one has the right to stand, belonging through kinship

Whakataukī = proverb, significant saying

Whānau = family

Whanaungatanga = kinship, relationality, connectedness

Whanonga pono = values, principles

Whare = house, building, residence